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Belles Lettres

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VOLUME SIXTEEN NINETEEN FIFTY

Contents

FOREWORD

With the aim and standard of previous volumes in mind, the editors present the sixteenth annual volume of *Belles Lettres* to the many readers among their fellow-students, the faculty, and other friends of the college.

INDIFFERENCE

Laura V. Roberts

The convenient indifference
Which I call my own—
With which I successfully cover the aching—
Has fallen away.
The fire is warm and sends
Its mellow glow about the room;
Indifference somehow seems quite
Out of place, and only aching
Loneliness must feel at home.
Tomorrow, I will build again,
Against the storm.
Tomorrow I will build against
The ache which will come
When next you smile;
Against the tears which will come
When next you walk away;
Tomorrow I will build indifference—
Perhaps even hate—but I will build
So that the night—cold outside
But warm firelight within—
Cannot make me betray the ache . . .
No! I will build so that there is no ache.
Tomorrow I will build so strongly
That the memory of you will cause no pain;
So that no warmth or love—
So that no beautiful music, or hill in spring,
Will bring the melancholy of your
Words to haunt me . . .
Tomorrow I will build against you—
But tonight . . .

FARMHOUSE FROM A HILL

Howard M. Rowlette

Trim it lay in all its sprawling juttings
Both angular and curved. Squatting fowl fashion
Upon the rich dark ground.
Suckling its life, from that same solid soil
Surrounded by its many outhouses
Reeking royally of innumerable odors;
Meretriciously snuggled 'neath verdant tree growth.
Lolling lazily out to the hazy horizon
A beautiful bountiness, the vital variety of viands.
Turbulent traceries of foliage.
Delicate dandelions dance in pastures green;
Of flowers withered in woodland haunt.
A perfect serenity.

A THOUGHT

Alfred V. Fields

An autumn leaf, unfelt, unfed,
Drops from its perch onto earth's bed—
In slumber sleeps, unknown its end;
A life complete—why question right?
Each day must blink its eyes in night;
One must go down who can't ascend.

STORM IN RETROSPECT

Shirley DeSimone

Long since, I walked along a lonely way;
The land wherein I walked was strange to me.
The fields stretched far around, a saddened sea
Of dusty winter brown. The sky was grey.
The wind and roadside dust began to play,
The night-time clouds came flying black and free,
Foretelling storm to come. No house or tree
In sight. The earth and sky had me for prey.
The bitter solitude I still can feel,
As rain drove down and hurt me with its sting.
The wind that blows on lonely ones has steel
In it to cut the soul, and it can bring
Them to their knees, unless they hear the peal
Of some strong brother's voice, to help them sing.

A CAVALIER

Robert Frank Cayton

From some nondescript land of sorcery,
thou ridest upon a regal, prancing steed
over the hill and up the road,
dusted lightly with gold crushed
from the worn doubloon
cast carelessly on dark velvet.
Thou art a confident cavalier
resplendent in onyx cloth
with a scarlet-lined cape
whipping behind thee
in the cool, distilled night air.

And when I run reluctantly
to throw open the latch-gate,
I am not frightened,
though glimmers of the old doubloon
touch thy stark face.
O, thou art never grim to me.

And when I must go with thee
to that unperceived land,
I shall mount the charger thou bringest,
and proudly ride away with thee.
I have no cause to fear thee,
no cause to fear thee ever.

RAT POISON

Marjorie C. West

The moaning saxophone egged on the coupling gestures of the dancers, as the neon sign outside the "21 Bar" blinked slowly on and off, alternately bathing the tiny room with a red, then, a green light.

I walked past the "21," stopped, and, hesitating, turned and retraced my steps. Still unsure, I paused for a moment, and then, with a burst of reassurance, shoved open the wooden-paneled door.

The long, mirrored bar on the right as I entered was well-stocked with everything but customers. One man sat alone staring down at his empty

glass, as would a fortune teller at her crystal ball. It was doubtful, however, that his fixed stare envoked the jingling of the telephone that a few minutes later broke the stillness at the bar.

Joe, the bartender, with a look of disgust, laid down the big beer mug, put the towel on the bar, and rubbing his hands along his white apron, ambled back to the telephone booth.

The repeated ringing stopped, and a few seconds later, Joe, still unhurried, stepped out of the phone booth, and called to the stranger, "Your name Adams?"

"Yeh, sure is," he replied, jumping down from the high chrome bar stool with a new enthusiasm.

I had taken a seat at the bar, and, with a grin, watched Joe walk slowly back, each step more dreadedly taken than the last.

Joe finally retrieved his towel, his beer mug, and his pleasantness, and with a look across the bar, greeted me. "Hi, Mr. Kennedy. Thought ya' wasn't goin' to make it."

"Better late than never, I guess," I retorted. "That sweetly foolish wife of mine called me at the office and told me to go by the drug store. She said not to hurry home, but I know how she is when she's waiting for something." I continued, "Guess I really shouldn't have stopped by here, but tonight it's for just one drink."

"Now, Mr. Kennedy, that's no way to talk."

"Yeh, Joe, just one tonight. Ya' know the only trouble my wife and I have ever had has been over my drinking. She knows that when I stop anywhere for one drink, I try to drink the place dry before I stagger home."

Joe's disgusted countenance had been adopted by the bar's other occupant as he came walking out of the phone booth. "That woman keeps me waiting all afternoon, and, then, calls to say she'll be a little late," he said, half speaking to Joe and I, and half muttering to himself.

Joe, whose curiosity is exceeded only by his dilatory manner, prodded the stranger on, "Troubles, fella?"

"Yeh, I've come 500 miles, all the way from Bloomfield, Pennsylvania, to see Jean, and waited in this stinking bar all afternoon. Now, she calls to say that her husband didn't go out of town as he had planned, and that, in order to get him out of the house," the stranger continued in a mockingly feminine manner, "she sent him after some rat poison, but that, possibly, for once, he'd come directly home."

"You mean, she ain't gonna' meet ya'," encouraged Joe, who by this time had put down his towel and beer mug, in an all-out effort to hear more.

"Sure, she'll meet me, if her husband plays true to form and doesn't come home tonight," he answered. "I'd give my eye-tooth for those days back in Bloomfield when Jean and I didn't have to worry about an unpredictable husband." "Of course," he continued, "I guess it pays to play it safe. I'd be the rat that got poisoned if that stupid husband of hers ever caught on."

I finished my one drink and dutifully got down from the bar stool and walked toward the paneled oak door. The big rope handle was easily located tonight, and the heavy door was opened without assistance.

I walked out onto the sidewalk, turned to the right, and began my jaunt home.

My wife and I lived just two short blocks from the busy downtown area. I stayed on my course, stopping neither at the City Club nor Hannegan's Bar, and I soon reached the old brownstone house where we had our three-room apartment.

I walked up the three cement steps, cracked and broken with age, all the while fumbling for my door key. I finally found the key hidden in the folds of my white handkerchief, and, finding it, easily opened the door with one quick turn of the key.

When I entered the long entrance hall that was one marked feature of all the brownstone houses along 52nd Street, my wife pleasantly called from the small adjoining room, "Did you get what I sent you for, darling?"

I answered, slowly and deliberately, "Yeh, Jean, I got the poison."

COUNTY SEAT ON SATURDAY

Shirley DeSimone

It may seem to some people that the county seat finds its excuse for being in the fact that there must be in each county a place for the laws to be administered, and for the merchants to band together and try to wrest from shrewd farmers a little of their dusty, toil-stained cash. This belief is doubtless sound as far as it goes, but to my mind the county seat serves an even higher purpose—that of providing a place to go on Saturday.

Saturday has a function unique among days, for it is the buffer between the busy, strenuous, clattering weekdays and still, silent, dreadfully holy Sunday. To plunge from one to the other might prove psychologically unnerving, so merry, naughty, daring, friendly, idle Saturday has inserted itself. It is a day for errands, like week days, but it is a day when the monotony of the week's work is to be abandoned, as it is on Sunday, Saturday, in short, is the day for variety, adventure, and fun, and all the good country folks know this from the littlest boy who hitch-hikes in to ride (in spirit) with the Durango Kid, to the oldest man, who manages (who knows how?) to wangle the choicest seat in the courthouse yard every week.

So it is, then, that on a summer Saturday morning, the boiling breakfast coffee bubbles more briskly in the big grey coffee pot, the red hair oil is more copiously applied, and little boys and girls are more sternly admonished to stay clean. The farmers are coming to town! Buying, selling; seeing, being seen; walking, standing; laughing, frowning; so it is with the crowd. By watching the people passing by, one can see a sort of composite country person, from life to death.

See this one coming here! A little girl, knee-high. Her dress is red, splattered with yellow and blue flowers whose size ill suits that of the diminutive wearer. Her hair, tow-white, hangs down in undetermined home-made curls, obviously a tribute to the importance of the day. This hair is decorated by a great red satin bow, which has slipped forlornly down over one ear. And, oh, anguish! The pavement, hot under the noon sun, is searing her little country feet, unused to the protective restrictions of shoes. She wails to her mother to pick her up, but gets no answer. Her mother, a stout woman with large hands and arms, tramps angrily on, pretending not to heed her crying daughter, who minces painfully in her wake, curling her little burnt toes. The mother in one hand holds an empty cream-bucket, and in the other a bag of groceries, from which peeps that exotic, unfamiliar vegetable, celery. Poor child! Her pain now is nothing to what it will be tonight, when her mother threatens to leave her home next Saturday.

Here come the pursuer and the pursued! The pursued are two young girls wearing brilliantly gaudy mail-order dresses. They totter dangerously and painfully on their first high heels. Their hair has been cast sternly in identical molds, for each has a new permanent wave. When they shake their heads, their hair does not seem to move. Their mouths are daubed heavily with bright scarlet, and the healthy brown of their freckled weekday skin has been deadened with cold cream and embalmed with powder. They are talking to one another with artificially rapt concentration, laughing too-loud vivacious laughs, and tossing arch remarks back over their heads without looking, for it would be the grossest breach of decorum to acknowledge in any way their awareness of the two slick-haired young strangers who are almost treading on their wavering heels.

The two youths lope hopefully with a plowing gait. There is something of the cowboy in their garb. One wears an oddly cut bright shirt with a trim suggestive of buckskin lacings. The other has rolled up his trousers a bit to show some highish-heeled boots. About them both floats an aura of rose-scented hair tonic. They say nothing to each other, each keeping his eyes fixed on his quarry, and his most ingratiating smile in readiness. Each knows his chance will come, as it does when the prey stops at the corner for a traffic light, casually adjusting its hosiery during the wait. After exchanging a few blundering **bons mots,** they pair off and repair to the darkness of the movie, where each boy, with arm draped artlessly around his lady's shoulder,

will accompany the popcorn's crackle with instructions and imprecations hissed at the screen.

While riders thunder by inside, the day wears on outside. The grocery shelves become depleted, the old man whittling on the courthouse steps surrounds himself with microscopic curls of wood. The girls in the dime store begin to wonder if nine o'clock will ever come, the flow of preaching in the courthouse yard dribbles to a stop. Old women with heavy shopping bags begin to say their interminable goodbyes.

The old man standing on the corner begins to look for a ride home. He was on his way to town before the dew was dry, amply supplied with chewing tobacco and friendliness. All day he has talked crops and politics to strangers, funerals and sicknesses to friends. In his hand he clutches a bag of ten-cent-store candy, which he is taking to his good, thin, old wife, who must now be cooking supper at home. His faded blue eyes scan the departing traffic confidently. Sure enough, a neighbor is driving by. In the sadly over-burdened Ford, the mother and father are almost obscured by a squirming mass of children. Wisely concealing the candy in the depths of his shiny black coat, he climbs in. Surrounded by the noisy youngsters, he begins to rehearse mentally the stories he'll tell at the supper table.

Saturday is almost over. The county seat returns to the possession of the shopkeepers. Back to the strong earth go the farmers and their wives, their love for it replenished by the contrast of a day in town. Beyond the booming shape of next week's work shines next week's Saturday.

SONNET

Laura V. Roberts

The day has dawned and I am still a slave
To memories which haunt me while I sleep;
But you have questioned why my face is grave
And why the sadness in my eyes runs deep.
I see you laugh a hundred times a day
And know you smile for others as for me;
I could not love you if you were not gay,
But question how sincere your smile must be.
But smile, and go on laughing for them all,
And I will find a gayer one than you,
Who has one smile which answers not **their** call,
And angers not my heart as **your** smiles do.
Perhaps it will be difficult to find
A lover who can love and yet be kind.

A COUNTRY KITCHEN

Howard M. Rowlette

Some geraniums sat in a window gay,
While pots and pans on the pantry wall
Toyed with a glint from the morning's ray,
Then settled to rest on a well worn shawl
Flung to a chair in a moment of haste.
A kettle on coals began to hum,
And answered right back by another one.
The whole kept in time by the clock's pendulum.
The smells all were wafted, stirred by a breeze—
Fresh baked bread, and souring cheese,
Fresh canned foods to appetites tease.

THE FIRST SUMMER RAIN

Mary Douglas Cornelison

I walked in the rain last night . . . . . the first summer rain . . . . . .
along wet pavements . . . . . beneath shadowy, pungent trees . . . . . .
beside houses, like white prisons against the damp wonder of the night.
And I drew the night's anonymity close around me like a cloak,
so that I might look on this night's beauty unobserved by the white prison dwellers.
I saw the gaudy flash of neon lights dimmed by the night's compassionate mist . . . . . .
and I remembered our winter walks in the rain . . . . . .
a dream ago . . . . . .
The steady beat of the rain lulled my senses,
and I felt somehow that you were there with me . . . . . .
that once more we were cloaked in the night's easy silence . . . . . .
broken only by our footsteps and the gentle monotony of the rain.
I reached out for your hand's warmth . . . . . .
a low laugh of deep pleasure rising slowly in my throat.
My laughter was lost in the distant rumbling of the thunder.
I felt the rain strike my face . . . . . .
course down its length like large tears
blurring my eyes by the mist on my lashes.
Then I knew . . . . . you are gone . . . . . gone beyond recall;
only the night, the rain, and the hours that held our love are immutable . . . . . .
But this first summer rain washed me free . . . . . .
free of all tears, of all longing for you,
just as those winter rains bound me to you . . . . . .
a dream ago . . . . . .

MY GRANDFATHER

Doris Croley

Old folks down in Harlan County still remember my grandfather—Big Judge Caldwell. He was a person well-loved by everyone. Grandfather Caldwell, a huge, towering mass of man, always wore black—black string ties and big, black, broad-brimmed hats. He had white hair that curled down around his collar. As far as I know, he never raised his voice and I never saw him angry.

Grandfather was a principal of one of the county high schools and, odd as it may seem, the students thought him wonderful. They considered him as necessary to school life as a rudder to a boat. Always when John played hookey, or Bill hit Tom, or even the time when Alex was caught smoking in the gymnasium, the judge would always understand. First he would talk it over with the boys. His warm color glowing through his tan, his clear, steady eyes, and erect, vigorous form, all testified to his keen zest in the adventure of life. Most people would have seen many of the school kids as hopeless "toughs." But to my grandfather they were just active boys, eager for life, who had been made what they were by unwholesome surroundings. He discovered, while on a field trip one day, their happy participation in outdoor life. Thus began one of the best Boy Scout organizations in that section of the state. He seemed to realize how necessary it is to have a strong guiding power in one's life.

Life was always an adventure to Grandfather Caldwell. By him, the worst of things could be made fun to the school kids. Not only was he involved with his high school, but the children in the orphanage over in the next state had high regard for him. It was always the judge and his community who remembered them with fruit and baskets of food on Christmas Day, on Easter Sunday, on Valentine's Day, and on numerous other days.

But there was another side to my grandfather. While he loved people and found keen enjoyment in living with people and helping others whenever he could, he, too, was possessed with the companionship of solitude. A great reader of Thoreau, Grandfather loved the walks through the woods as did the famed author. Many times, leaving the world behind him, he would escape to the beautiful mountains surrounding his home. He loved the mountain air, the flaming redness of the maples in October, the corn shocks, the pumpkins, the black walnut trees, and the lift of the hills. He found all of these in his walks in southeastern Kentucky.

But one warm, sunshiny day, my grandfather left us for his "castle in the air," and I knew that his "work need not be lost." The huge cathedral might well have been a tiny chapel for all it could do to hold those of us who wanted to say goodbye to him. While I stood in the cool, candle-lit dusk of the church waiting for the procession to make its way up the sunny avenue, I looked about me at all the lips moving in silent prayer and the many people wiping their eyes free of tears and unmindful of shame. I thought of all those whom he had reassured that there might be, after all, a good deal to this institution called the human race.

No wonder all the sidewalk space as far as one could see was needed for the overflow at his funeral. To me, the mute multitude in the June sunlight was the more impressive congregation.

As I returned home that evening, a mood of melancholy wistfulness fell over me. Instead of mourning for Grandfather Caldwell, I only thought of his favorite passage from his favorite author. "If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them." That passage should have been the epitaph of my grandfather, Judge Caldwell.

"I" FOR IDIOT

Robert C. Points

"I am the biggest fool that ever lived," my friend, Bill Miller, muttered.

I shook my head.

"I am! I am!"

"No, you're not."

"What! After what I told you! I am the biggest fool that ever lived!"

"Have you ever read 'Human Idiots' by Michael Van Putman?" I asked.

Bill shook his head.

"Well," I said, "about three years ago I came across it. Bought it for a dime in a second-hand bookshop. Never had I read anything that pleased me as much. Never had I hoped to find an author who would express my ideas so thoroughly—and so well. And after all, that's what we are really looking for in an author—our ideas, isn't it so?"

Bill continued to grumble—"biggest fool—"

" 'Human Idiots!'—the very title gave me a sharp delight. I feared, at first, that it might be another 'triangle' story, or perhaps some social diatribe. It was neither. It was just what I had desired. The author proved conclusively, mathematically, that we are all idiots, that our ancestors were all idiots, that our descendants, forever and forever, will be idiots."

"Biggest fool—biggest fool—"

"Of course, any man who has reached maturity and is honest enough would say the same. But simply to shout, 'idiots—idiots,' means nothing. You need an artist to prove it—prove it in a way that permits of no contradiction. Well, 'Human Idiots' pierced every bubble which we are pleased to call human intelligence, and proved that nothing existed, exists, or will exist, except idiocy—collective idiocy. Not insanity, mind you. That is something else. Insanity means simply deviation from an established norm. Idiocy—defectives—idiocy represented by an open mouth, saliva running down the chin—"

"Biggest fool—biggest fool—" Bill continued his lamentation.

"I decided to meet the author," I pursued my story. "Imagine me—the most timid of people—daring to entertain such a notion! But I was impelled by an irresistible urge to see the man, to press his hands in gratitude, to bow in reverence before his genius.

"For days I walked in front of his door. If I only dared! At last, when I was certain I should never do it, I found myself pressing the small, white button, deeply, deeply, to the very end of its cavity."

"Biggest fool—biggest fool—"

" 'May I see the author of "Human Idiots!"?' I asked a tall gentleman, handsome with a small beard and meticulously groomed like a college professor or bank president."

"I am the author of 'Human Idiots!' "

"I was taken aback. I expected him different—a small man, humped, a man with frightened or angry eyes. But no matter. I was audacious. When a timid man becomes audacious, nothing can stop him, you know. I am inclined to believe that men like Caesar and Napoleon had been timid, more timid than the majority of mankind, and that is why they had to become more daring than the rest. Anyhow, I grasped the author's hand, and said: 'Sir, your book is the great masterpiece I have longed all my lifetime to read. I was bored by the classics. I was irritated by the moderns. I longed to read the great truth—' "

"I continued in this vein for some time. The author seemed delighted. He invited me to enter. He led me into his library. It was spotlessly neat. Every book in its place. On the table a flower-vase with fresh flowers, bookends which hugged a few volumes, leather-bound, an ancient inkstand. I should have wished books strewn all about, sheets of paper, like leaves under foot. In short, disorder and folly—a replica of the man's mind. But I would not let this dampen my enthusiasm. I went on talking about 'Human Idiots!'—my admiration for its style, for its truth, for its uniqueness. The author was increasingly delighted. He offered me a cigarette, asked me what I wished to drink. I told him I was not a drinker, but if he had something mild, like sherry, I would appreciate it. He brought a bottle out of the adjoining room and poured glasses. I stood up, raised my glass, and toasted: 'To "Human Idiots!" '

"The wine lent fresh vigor to my tongue—you know how I am—a few sips and I become eloquent. Now and then, the author managed to wedge in a remark. He was distressed by the fact that few people read him; by the publishers who lost money on his books; by the rejection slips from magazines.

" 'What does it matter, sir, if idiots don't understand or appreciate you? It's a sign that your book tells the truth—we all are idiots!' I laughed. He laughed also, and refilled the glasses. I stood up again, and toasted: 'To the author of "Human Idiots!" To the greatest idiot!'

"He looked at me sharply. 'What do you mean. In what sense—the greatest idiot?'

" 'In a literal sense. In a literal sense.' He glared at me, but I went on blithely. 'The greatest idiot, of course. For, who but an idiot would bother writing for idiots?' I drank the glass at one draught, as wine should never be drunk, but it gave me courage and, I thought, brilliance. 'Certainly, sir, in a very literal sense. The greatest idiot of them all!' I said exultantly. 'You know, I was disappointed when you met me at the door. You look like a college or bank president. I expected to see a sort of a hunchback with an open mouth, saliva running down his chin.' I was about to repeat the phrase 'in a literal sense,' when I felt my face all wet, splashed by the wine which the author hurled at me.

" 'Impertinent fool!' he shouted, waving his fists. 'How dare you call me an idiot!'

" 'Aren't we all—from the beginning of time to the end? As you say in the Preface—' I muttered, wiping my face. 'In a literal sense—'

" 'How dare you! I am the greatest mind of the age—author of 100 books, published and unpublished!'

"I became again the timid man I naturally am. I actually felt my timid-

ity overcome me like some living thing. I became small, small, while the author towered over me like a mountain.

" 'Get out of my house! Get out!' he shouted.

"But before I managed to extricate myself out of the chair and reach the door, I heard gutter words that seemed absurd and ridiculous emerging from the mouth of a gentleman with a small white beard, immaculately dressed like a bank or college president."

"I am the biggest fool that ever lived," Bill once again punctured my story.

Impatiently, I said: "You are! You are!"

He dropped the hands which had held his mourning head, and glared at me. "I said you are the biggest fool that ever lived!"

"Why am I?" he shouted. "Why?"

"Because you had no business to let that gold digger make fun of you as you did."

"And how should I know she was after my money?"

"Everybody knew it, and everybody told it to you, but you wouldn't listen because you are the biggest fool that ever lived!"

"You've got a nerve calling me that," he yelled, jumping from his seat. "And that author was right kicking you out of the house."

I had been under the impression that he had heard nothing of what I related, but little seemed to have escaped him, as he went on lambasting me. "Going around insulting people—calling them names! Why, I—I—" he raised the chair.

Fortunately I was on the other side of the door when the chair struck.

"I am the greatest idiot and the biggest fool that ever lived," I said aloud when I reached the street, and looked around belligerently to see if anyone dared to agree with me.

IN TENSE

Lois Henson

The past is in the hands of Satan;
It is dead, beyond recall.
The present, in the hands of man;
He can work, or dream, or brawl.
But the future God is holding;
It's the noblest gift of all.

MY MOTHER

Laura V. Roberts

He sat listening to a speech. The auditorium was filled to capacity, and the stage was decorated with freshly-cut spring flowers. Just behind the speaker sat four other people, and behind them the college choir, seemingly serene in white robes. The speaker, a woman, was an attractive, pleasing person, a woman whose age no one knew, because no one thought of age in connection with her. She was saying, "I know your mothers by the things I see in your faces . . ."

"I wonder," he thought, "if she could know my mother by my face . . ."

The lady sitting beside him was crying a little, and across the aisle, a little in front of him, he saw a girl place her hand over that of the older woman on her right.

"Home," the speaker said musingly, her voice penetrating his consciousness again, "somehow, we always turn back home, and know that there, as constant as the stars, someone is waiting to comfort us."

"Home . . . I wonder," he mused again, "if homes **are** like that," and his barely visible smile betrayed bitterness.

"I'd like to ask you down," his imagination said to the speaker. "Come on down to the proud city from which I came. I'll take you down to Bay Street." He saw them in his mental picture—he and the lovely, assured speaker, walking down Bay Street. Suddenly she faded from the scene and he saw himself stop for a moment and look up at the building, the dark, dingy, seemingly lifeless building in which he had lived until he was sixteen.

He shook himself away from the thoughts, and a wave of relief spread over him as he realized that he was not on Bay Street, but secure and happy here at the college. Yes, safer, respectable; respected.

He could not, however, stop his mind from reviewing the circumstances which had at last brought him here. He remembered his first four years of college—working in the library, and the drug-store downtown; he remembered typing for other students and working as assistant to Dr. Ellis. Now, after the struggle he was here teaching in this college from which he had graduated with highest honors only four years before. The four year interval had included his graduate work and his two-year army career. He had attained one of his goals. No, he was not finished; but at least many of his dreams were realized. Here was the work he loved; here the wholesome, intellectual, kind people with whom he was so perfectly at ease. Somehow he knew that soon this would be the only life which would seem real to him.

"So think of mother today," the lovely voice said, "for this is essentially her day . . . and then you may be proud to say to yourself, 'My mother'."

Mentally he turned again to Bay Street. Once there, he found himself still standing before the old apartment building, looking up at the window he knew so well. Mounting the dark stairs, he heard a scratching-scramble as a rat hurried along the hall. The apartment was as filthy as ever, and a greasy smell persisted. A woman lay across the unmade bed, a woman, wrinkled and ravaged, whose hair was an unnatural color of auburn . . .

Turning, he literally fled down the shadowy stairs, the odor nearly stifling him, and left the building which was suited by type and location to the business of the woman upstairs.

* * * *

In the well-lighted auditorium, beautifully decorated and filled with smiling people, no one heard him say, "My mother."

"WILLING AND ABLE"

Mrs. Bess M. Hays

There was an air of worried expectancy over the little mining town. Even the familiar grinding of the noisy shakers and the rumbling of the coal cars became ominous sounds. The coal dust sifting its way through the morning light was symbolic of the dark forebodings that filled the hearts and minds of the husky workmen filing toward the mouth of the pit. The motorman with his lighted cap like a beacon in the murky air hunched in the box of the motor. Strung out behind him were the squat, square mining cars. Empty now of their usual ebon cargo, they awaited the arrival of the workers. The twinkling lamps on the miners' caps and the gleaming dinner pails made strange contrast with their coal blackened overalls.

The hard-toed shoes clumped against the sides of the cars as wordlessly they climbed into the waiting man-trip. There was no need for words. Everyone knew this was the last day's operation for Number Seven. This part of the diggings was being abandoned by the mining company.

As the last man pushed into his place, sitting flat on the bottom of the car with alternate rows of feet and heads, the motorman put the pole on the trolley wire, and with a sizzle and flash the trip started. Into the blackness of the mountain they went. Far ahead there was a feeble glow of signal lights. This with the gleam of the headlights on the steel tracks was the only break in the inky region. The motorman turned the big iron brake-wheel, removed his trolley pole from the wire overhead, and came grinding to a stop. The men climbed over the sides of the cars and hurried to their various work

stations. They walked bent over to avoid the low trolley wire hanging only five or six feet above the tracks. They raised clouds of dust as they kicked aside the piles of broken coal beside the tracks.

In groups of twos and threes, the miners turned aside to their rooms and headings. The main track branched at every room, and empty cars were pushed up to the end of the tracks waiting the shovels of the loaders. At regular intervals along the track, stout props or timbers held back the black roof. In some places there were heavy beams across the tops of the timbers. Probably the miners never thought of it, but there was something of Hercules holding up the world in these great props.

Two men took off their denim jackets, hung them with their dinner pails on a nearby timber. One was a tall, thin man with the drawl of the Kentucky mountaineer.

"What you gonna do, Big Joe, now that she's a shuttin' down?"

Big Joe didn't answer but picked up his shovel and began throwing coal into the empty car. He was Italian, short, fat, with a narrow brown moustache that curled down into two question marks. He seldom made use of his privileges at the bath house, and around each eye there was always a heavy line of coal dust. He looked as if he had emerged from a fistic encounter with two black eyes. His worn, black workclothes were stiff with sweat and coal dirt. The overalls had been cut off to accommodate his short, sturdy legs, and were stuffed into the tops of the heavy, steel-toed shoes. Joe was the only miner on the section who could walk down the low entries without ducking his head to avoid trolley wires and timber headers.

Big Joe's buddy had not really expected him to answer his question. Of necessity Joe talked very little. His buddy did not understand Italian, and Joe's English was limited. He was learning English, however, the English of the coal mine. When he first began his work, he was frightened at the strangeness of the mine. When the big gathering motor roared up to the room for the cars of coal Joe had loaded, he would drop his shovel and dive back into the black face of the seam. Then, sheepishly, he would exclaim, "She so beeg." In some respects he proved a very apt pupil in English. Soon he had learned to emphasize the "so beeg" in a way that would have done credit to the toughest native loader.

The coal mine was a marvel to Joe. He never tired of watching the endless operations. Only a few nights before he had been given an extra shift with the night crew. He was speechless as he watched the machine operators go about their work. The electrically operated machines cut out huge blocks of coal by means of an endless chain attached to a disc on a motor. The bits or teeth sawed their way into the black coal. Joe stood petrified with amazement as the drillers and shooters followed with their work. The electric drill bored deep holes into the coal for the powder or dynamite. The workers almost dragged Joe away by force when they fired the shots that crumbled the blocks of coal and made them ready for the next day's loading.

Joe and his buddy worked without stopping until their cars were filled and pulled away. While they waited for more empties, they took down their dinner pails and ate their lunch. The hulking figure of the chief foreman loomed in the opening of their room without warning. "Hey, you Joe, here's a paper for you." The tone held dislike and the face showed distaste as the fat little Italian came forward to get the paper.

"What she say, Boss?" asked Joe in a worried whisper.

"Read it and see," the answer was terse and rough.

"Lemme see, Joe," his buddy offered when the foreman had gone. "I ain't sich a good reader, but I figure I'll know what it says." For a few minutes he studied the paper and then silently handed it back to the waiting Joe.

"Maybe I go with rest of men to new mines." Joe was hopeful.

"No, you don't, Joe, but you got a good right to go. All the rest are gonna' git transferred. You load better coal than half the men in these diggings. The boss's got it in for you because he don't like furriners. If I was

you, I'd see the union committee. It's agin the contract to fire a man without cause."

Joe's buddy returned to his work, muttering indignantly to himself. He realized Joe was the victim of an unreasonable dislike for foreigners on the part of the foreman. He was disturbed and somehow outraged, but he could not find words or expression for his feelings.

When the men gathered at the entry to wait for the man-trip at the end of the day's work, it was found that every man in the section had been given a transfer to the new mine except Joe. Again the words on the blue paper were read to Joe. "Discharged. Reason: Work unsatisfactory."

"What she say, that unsatisfactory?" Joe was puzzled by the long, unfamiliar word.

"It means your work don't suit 'em, Joe," explained a fellow worker. "How many cars do you load?"

"He led the sheet, last half," Joe's buddy answered for him. "There ain't a better loader on the section."

The man-trip halted outside the mine entrance and the tired miners tumbled out, crowding toward the bath-house, eager to get home to hot suppers and rest. Joe climbed over the side of his car, a picture of dejection and woe. "Unsatisfactory." The very sound of the word terrorized him. He was sick at heart. Remembering the advice of some of the men to see the union committee, he looked about and presently recognized one of the officers of the union.

"Hey, mister, please. I need see you."

The man stopped and looked at Joe, who handed him the blue paper.

"Well, Joe, I think I know the reason for this, and it has nothing to do with your work. There is a meeting of the union committee and management tonight in the big office. You be there about seven and we'll see what we can do." Noticing Joe's dejection, he added, "Don't worry, Joe. We'll fix everything O. K."

Long before the appointed hour, Joe was standing outside the office. He shrank back against the wall when he saw the foreman, but he distinctly heard his profane reference to a "wop." When the union committee arrived, Joe was taken in and given a seat in a corner some distance from the conference table.

For an hour discussions of grievances and contract violations waxed hot. Sometimes it was a committee member who pounded the table and grew loud in his demands. Again, it was the foreman who became abusive. In his corner, a strange thing happened to Joe. In the haze of the tobacco smoke about the table, the men seemed to change. In their places, Joe thought he could see black-shirted, black-booted, hard-faced men. The American talk seemed to ring Italian in his ears. Maybe it was the beating of his own heart. Maybe it was worry that clouded his eyesight. Surely there could be no connection between a terrifying scene of long ago in Fascist Italy and one in free America. While Joe pondered this, a man came quietly into the room. He greeted the men cordially, and took a seat at the table. The talk ceased. The men seemed to be waiting respectfully for the newcomer to open the discussion.

"Gentlemen, I'll look over the grievances." The man's tone held authority, but it did not sound like the foreman's. For some reason Big Joe breathed easier. The vision of the black shirts and Italy disappeared entirely. Fascinated, he listened. Sometimes the committee argued but the man always listened carefully to their arguments. Sometimes he took a magic book called "the contract" and read parts of it aloud. Then Joe heard his own name and saw a committee member present the blue paper. The man read it and began to question the foreman.

The foreman and one of the committee had an angry exchange of words. In the heat of the argument, the foreman used the word "wop" repeatedly. Finally the tonnage records of previous months' work were spread on the table. Everyone looked intently at the sheets of paper. The committee member said, "Joe's record speaks for itself. He has led the sheet for three months."

"He can't understand plain English. It's not safe to work a man that dumb," the foreman contended.

"Where are your safety records?" the man asked.

The safety records were brought and spread on the table. The men about the table scrutinized them with care. The results of the daily inspections for safe timbering, clean clearances, rock dusting, were all recorded. Joe's record was clear. There was not a mark against him.

The men about the table waited for the man to speak. "Gentlemen, it is always my policy to treat the men who work in my mines with utmost fairness. Satisfactory work is based on reasonable production and observation of safety procedures. Unless you can show an employee has failed in one or both of these, I feel there is no ground for dismissal."

The meeting came to an end.

"Come to the office in the morning for a transfer slip, Joe."

The foreman was gruff but Joe didn't mind. He felt wonderful. He didn't know it but he had just witnessed one of the miracles of democracy.

HOW DOES ONE WRITE?

Patricia Lackey

How does one write an essay? How does one write anything? The mind is supposed to hold a wealth of information, ideas, thoughts to be expressed, and, yet, how can anyone else share these things unless they are set down in words? There must be something there, some spark, often called imagination, but I think it must be something more potent than imagination. Some are gifted with the power to express exactly what they want to. Others have thoughts crammed inside them, but the words and pictures must be forever locked inside their minds, because there is no ability to help these words flow from the pen.

To me, there is no helplessness such as this. One may be blind, unable to walk or hear, but if he is able to express the beauty locked within him, then he cannot be called completely helpless. There are so many things in life to be written about—yet there are so few words to write with. Can one describe a spring day in the woods, the quiet beauty of surrounding nature, in the same words one would use to express the vivacious excitement of an athletic contest? There is where the gift of expression is needed. Words must be changed, varied to give mood, suggestiveness, and to create the proper atmosphere for the subject written about.

Think what the world is missing. There must be millions of people with thoughts swirling around inside them—thoughts that should be shared with others, but there is no way of letting these thoughts loose—no way of letting someone else enlarge on these ideas. Many of these thoughts may be only momentary flashes of beauty to the originator, but to another they may be the one thing to raise him from gloom, to give an added zest to life. Who knows—perhaps past wars could have been prevented if people could only have expressed the hidden and secret spots of beauty within them. Words are wonderful things—if only everyone could use them to such purpose as the gifted few do.

PORTRAIT IN WATER

Robert C. Points

It's raining . . . .
chilling-warm rain, caressing my face with boneless fingers . . . .
strong, slanting rain . . . . like puppet strings guided by an
omnipotent robot . . . .
or
like bars of a cage.
Down it comes,
In endless drops—

A deathly hum,
That never stops.
It cleanses . . . . no . . . . conceals . . . .
the average, simple, charlatanic, parvenu, Philistine figure . . . .
incessantly trudging along . . . . a prayer on his lips and a flag
in his eyes . . . .
a broken figure . . . . broken by adulterous hope of a mystic, wishful
dream . . . .
by ceaseless battle between supercilious Good and Evil . . . .
regretting the past; dreading the future—broken upon those
wheels that move in opposite directions . . . . sterile, cyclic,
animalistic emotionalism . . . .
by a hypnotic state of insidious suggestibility, intolerance,
indiscrimination, unreceptiveness, and wishfulness promulgated
by exploiters and substituted for objective experiences . . . .
considering hopes and wishes actualities . . . . thinking what-is
and what-should-be are tantamount . . . . believing . . . . reputation
and ability, legality and morality, theory and practice, use-
fulness and truth are identical . . . . fanatical faith . . . .
blind.

Still it comes,
In lesser drops—
A deathly hum,
That nearly stops.
Gentle, soothing rain now . . . . "each drop reflects the universe" . . . .
reflects sin (what is it?) . . . . need we ask Aristotle or Plato,
Christ or Mohammed? Ah, no . . . . "Sin is sweet beyond forgiving;
brief beyond regret." Sin . . . . the answer to superstitious, un-
compromising moralisms.
"Say of shame—what is it?
Of virtue—we can miss it,
Of sin—we need but kiss it,
And it's no longer sin."
Reflects love . . . . "All that find him lose him" (but all have
found him fair) . . . . Love . . . . the point beyond which we stand
alone . . . . yet fools attempt to divide the qualitative as if it
were quantitatively divisible . . . . Love . . . . the nowness of
happiness . . . . only now . . . . no abstractions of time—moments . . . .
past, present, future . . . . happiness in the immediate present . . . .
possible only in the nows.
Delight lasts but an hour,
Yet therein lies its power.
Reflects hate . . . . a warm, bellicose emotion . . . . taps one's energy;
gives it direction . . . . more efficient than love, more clever . . . .
induces men to pristine killing in the name of religion, of a
flag, of gold, of "love", etc. . . . . very efficient—if they know
not why they kill.
Say of hate—I have it,
Of love—I want it,
Of both—I need them,
Of neither (fear)—I'm religious.
Reflects man . . . . man, the individual . . . . individuality—the ex-
pression of his egoism . . . . as individual as these drops of water—
drawn from the sea, sifted into a puddle, drifted into a stream,
into a river, obstructed and enhanced—finally reaching the
boundless seas again . . . . as "individual" as that drop in the sea.
No longer it comes,
The earth is slop,
The deathly hum,
Will come to stop . . . . as,
And with his destructive toys,
man may reach his rumored greatness . . . . in the last world.

Restatement in retrospect:
"One world or no world,"
Some proclaim, with voices astute.
Is that the only absolute?
Yet,
We still see flags unfurled;
And,
We still see ethereal choirs
Defending the golden hoard;
And,
We still see human desires
Guarded by the Flaming Sword;
And....
Coup d'etat or **coup de plume?**
Humanity breathlessly awaits!

THE SNOW-GIFT

Robert Frank Cayton

The snow fluffed about him as he walked down the deserted street. Since this town was strange to him, he didn't know where he was.

He had debated for miles while riding in the open box car of a slow-moving freight whether to leave a somewhat comfortable resting place to search for food in an unfamiliar town, but his stomach had not debated. It told him he must get off and somehow, some way find food. The contents of a bottle of milk, stolen from a back porch in Cincinnati, was the only thing he had taken into his stomach for over a week. But his stomach had refused to hold the substance.

The freight had lumbered onto a siding near the town station. He had slipped from the car and made his way from the tracks to what he thought might be the main street of the town.

Perhaps he might beg some money. When hunger growled, he readily bowed to its demands. However, since it was late at night and the wind whipped cold through the straight, broad streets of the mid-western town, there was no one to be found on any of the streets.

He stopped in front of an "open-all-night" hamburger stand and the smell of frying meat and onions and boiling coffee sickened him. He stumbled into the wooden stand and humbly shuffled up to the counter. At the far end of the counter, a man and woman sat drinking coffee. A man, wearing a worn leather jacket, sat several stools away from them. Busy attacking a plate of French fries and a big steak, he ate noisily. Between bites, he sipped black liquid from the mug that steamed beside his plate.

The young man behind the counter was washing dishes. When he saw him, he came to the counter opposite him, wiped his hands on a huge white apron that was showing signs of use, and asked in a voice that betrayed his age, "What for you?"

Wetting his chapped lips with a swollen tongue, he looked cautiously about him. He wanted to ask for food, for anything that the boy might give him. He nervously twisted his hands and then when he became conscious that the four people were staring fearfully at him, he turned and hurried as fast as his weakened legs would carry him from the warmth of fire and food.

As he stumbled down the street, he saw something gleaming in the snow. He dropped to his knees and fumbled it into his hands with chilled fingers. His heart complained sharply and he stopped a moment in his examination of the object to grab at his chest. The pain subsided and when it did, he realized that the object he held was only a ball of tin-foil made from chewing gum wrappers. Some child had probably worked up the mess and thrown it onto the walk as he skipped along to a warm home.

"It's not money! It's not money," he cried hoarsely. Then he looked up and said, "I once found money on a street in Columbus. It was a fifty-cent

piece." Although no one could hear him, he jabbered on as if he were talking to a friend. "It isn't entirely impossible that I might find money here on this street. Just enough to buy me some coffee. That's all I really need. Just something to tide me over. I'll find a job here tomorrow. Then everything will be all right again. It will be like when I worked in the bank." He stood up and rolled the ball of tin-foil about in his palm. "The bank. Oh, why did I ever run away?" He shouted to the wind and the snow and the empty street and tears of emotion streaked the grime that covered his youngish face. The tears were jewels of his grey eyes that reflected misery, fear, and above all the stinging jabs of hunger.

"Why? Why?" he muttered as he dragged on down the street. He stepped from the curb and the slush in the gutter oozed through his tattered shoes. He chilled when the slush touched the bare skin of his sockless foot.

His eyes, frantically searching the gutter, almost failed to see it. It was lying pinned beneath a lump of fresh snow, as if it had been left for someone. Perhaps it had been dropped from some pocket by a careless taxi fare. He stared at it and then he fell into the slush and grabbed at it.

He couldn't believe it. Had he been right he would find another piece of money? He staggered up against the lamp post and examined it more closely under the yellow light. It was a dirty green, yet he could make out that it was money. He brushed more snow away and his heart pained briefly when he saw it was a five dollar bill.

"It isn't true. But it must be. It must be. I've found money before," he croaked to the street lamp.

He started to put the money into the pocket of his ragged coat and then with horror he thought he might lose it. He clutched it in his right hand and started across the street.

He didn't hear the motor of the car, he didn't see the headlights, or hear the screech of brakes as the vehicle slid on the iced cement, for he crumpled to the street in a convulsion of pain seconds before the wheels of the car mashed across his body.

THE ODDEST THING

Patricia Lackey

Tom walked out of the doctor's office. There was a dazed, unbelieving look on his face. Stumbling down the stone steps, he faced the beautiful spring day with unseeing eyes. People he had known all his life turned and looked at him with amazement as he passed them by with no sign of recognition.

Hesitatingly, he started toward home. His mind was seething with only one thought—two weeks, two weeks to live—after that nothing.

It was hard to believe, yet there it was. He would not have believed it had not the X-rays proved it. He had asked for it straight as soon as he had seen Dr. Martin's grave and disturbed face, and he had gotten it straight—he would be dead in two weeks.

Such a short time was two weeks! Tom had no idea what to do to prepare for death beyond the usual things such as seeing that his insurance was in proper order and various last-minute things he must do at the office. Otherwise he was bewildered. He couldn't just go along as usual, because now everything was different. He saw the town he lived in and the people he knew with different eyes. The world was not the same any more. He must cram everything he could into fourteen or maybe less days.

A new thought struck him with horror. How could he tell his wife? At first he thought he wouldn't tell Helen at all, but let things come naturally. Then it occurred to him that it wouldn't be fair to her. She would want to know and help him if she could.

Tom turned in the flagstone path that led to his home, the small white bungalow that he would be leaving forever in a little time. Thank God, there was no mortgage. Helen would have that much, anyway. He opened the door

and entered the hall. Funny how one became aware of the least little thing now. For instance, that lamp on the hall table had a crack in the base.

Helen was bustling around in the kitchen making the usual noises a woman makes when she is in charge of a kitchen. Tom hated to think of leaving her. She was such a little thing, but she was more capable than most people thought.

"Tom? Is that you?" she called.

"Yeah, I'm home."

He strolled out to the kitchen and leaned in the doorway watching Helen prepare dinner. She glanced at him, turned, and looked again.

With a sudden flash of intuition she asked, "Is anything wrong?"

"No, I'm just tired." He was amazed that he could sound so calm.

All through dinner Helen watched him, trying to find what was bothering him.

After dinner as they sat by the fire, Helen again asked him, "Tom, something's bothering you. What is it? Can't you tell me?"

Tom knew he would have to tell Helen the truth, and there was no time to delay for an easier way of telling her—if there is an easy way to tell someone who loves you that you are going to die.

He broke the news as gently as he could, starting from the beginning of the pain through his shoulder and the fainting spells to the doctor's fatal words. Helen sat there, stunned, fear in her eyes as she stared at Tom. Tears welled up, then disappeared. After a long while she lifted her chin with a gesture of defiance and whispered,

"We'll make this the best two weeks in our lives."

The next day Tom cleaned out his desk at the office, did all necessary things toward helping someone else to take his place. He told the fellows that he was leaving in a couple of weeks for a different position in the city. They all expressed the usual sentiments about hating to see him go, and Tom wondered what they would say if they knew the truth.

During the next days Tom grew steadily weaker and he spent every moment he could with Helen. He never wanted her out of his sight, and she did the best she could toward getting him anything, granting his least wish. Now the once annoying habit Helen had of misplacing things only endeared her to him. He began to notice things about her that he had never paid much attention to before, and he realized that he had been taking her for granted for years. Tom thought back and remembered the little things like the time she quit her beloved bridge club just so she could spend more time with him.

As time wore on and the days turned into a week and then two, Tom noticed that Helen took a calm, almost happy, attitude about the matter. When he questioned her about it she could find no explanation. One day he told her how glad he was that she was not the kind of wife that went around crying all the time and wondering what she would do after he was gone.

Helen replied, a troubled look in her eyes, "I can't understand it. It's not that I have put it out of my mind. I fully realize what is going to happen, and yet, I can't seem to see myself after you are gone. I don't feel sad, and still I know that life will be completely empty without you."

Tom could not move out of bed now, and it was obvious that he was in constant pain. The doctor came every day to administer a sedative. Then Wednesday afternoon of the third week he died as Helen was lifting him up to a more comfortable position. Gently Helen lowered him to the bed, and with a strange smile she went to the telephone and called the doctor.

When Dr. Martin arrived he found Tom and Helen—Tom in bed as she had left him, but Helen was still sitting by the phone, her head on her arms, and she was smiling happily now.

For years afterward Dr. Martin often talked about it.

"It was the oddest thing," he would say, "her heart simply stopped beating. It is as if she were just waiting for Tom to die so she could go with him. They were always close, and yet she seemed to know—I guess it's just one of those things that no one can explain."

A GUINEA HEN

Shirley DeSimone

She is so old she is brittle and if too much strain were put on her, she would crack, I think, with the tinkle of falling icicles on breaking glass.

My father says she is a guinea hen in human form, and it is true that she always looks and sometimes sounds like one. Age has pulled her nose down into a beak, and thinned her hair so much that her head juts small and bony from her bent shoulders, just as that bird's does. Her feathers are the black-and-white cotton prints that old women always seem to find somewhere. She laughs a little scraping laugh like a guinea's call.

She has a wealth of stories to tell, stories of days just beyond the memory of my parents' generation. She could tell of golden afternoons when the loom hummed and cloth was born. She might speak of the monstrous labors women used to do: the giant sweaty misery of picking blackberries at midday, the endless vibration of clothes against washboard, and the numb, chilly urgency of curing fresh-killed pork in the fall.

She remembers, too, a night when she helped to dance a house right off its stone foundation, and how the screeching, savage fiddle kept on wailing, and the heavy feet continued to thump, even after the cabin slid crazily into the dust.

And she could tell, but will not, of a wild red-bearded man who one time rode a raft of mighty logs down a river ripe with springtime flood. She could mention that this half-barbarian came down alone, and took her back, his swiftly captured bride.

She knows these things, but does not speak of them, for her grown-up sons and daughters are ashamed to hear her old-time anecdotes. They are too close to see the magic of it all, so she obediently sits silent, laughing her guinea laugh at appropriate moments. Only some dark, bent tin-types can prove that there was a day when she put roses in her hair, and laughed not like a guinea, but a lark.

A LITTLE WHILE

Laura V. Roberts

If you will remember me
A little while—
Say, beyond the dawn of eternity—
Perhaps I shall have had days enough
To make you proud.

BEDELIA

Howard Rowlette

For fifteen years I lived in the mauve mists of the Mississippi, and side by side the river and I watched the years flow by us, watched the willows bud and die, watched insipid summer driven down beyond New Orleans by the steel wool clouds of winter, watched and wailed the passing of Bedelia.

Bedelia was our mammy. Yes, **our** mammy, the river's and mine. Her moods rose to turbulence as did the river, and sank to solemnity as I did. She talked and scolded the river much the same as she did me, and I can see her even now, her hulking body and heaving bosom, reflected in the flowing fudge waters, venting vigorous by her wrath at the mischievous stream and child.

I don't know how the river remembers Bedelia, but my most pleasant memories of her are usually tinged with something aromatic. She intrudes herself into every long cherished thought of my childhood, and seems the spirit and personification of exquisitely cooked food. She wasn't merely a cook, she had many talents and vices. But her food! It must come first; it is merely what to praise audibly, and what to save for silent worship.

I can recall with pleasure the savory applesauce she used to feed me. It was deliciously complex; it had three distinct elements: a thinly sweet yellow syrup, a silky mush, and large pieces of tender apple, faintly, oh so

faintly! tart. She served it still warm and powdered dully on top with a fragrant mixture of sugar and cinnamon. She served me at the table, in the garden of lilting lilacs, or would carry a bowlful to me down a steep bank to my most perilous seat in a crotch of a sad, drooping willow, which hung aggressively over a narrow, noisy creek, whose waters were not like the river, but always blue cold and in a tumbling hurry.

Impervious to time, that applesauce still bows and smiles among my most gracious memories.

But what of Bedelia herself? She was as munificent as the multiplication table. She was both tall and graceful yet hilariously heavy. And could she sing! Her singing was a vital and major part of her. Her repertoire was varied—she sang "Golden Slippers," "Nellie Gray," "Kathleen Mavoureen," "Alouette," and a number of Tschaikovsky's songs. She knew French carols and lullabies and a great many of Handel's sacred songs. I don't know where she learned them all, but I've a hunch that hundreds of them came from the "show-boat," and my mother may have taught her the classics, while the French themes she picked up from my father's folks. "Eli Eli" was my favorite, and when she sang it, her voice was the most mournful and passionate patterned sound I can remember. She could turn me from red anger to the most extravagant and soul-felt tears by three bars of it.

Scornful and merry, she was perplexing and proud. By birth and lineage she was pure pagan. Her hymns, when she sang them, became votive chants sung with offerings of spiritual grapes and blood. The god she worshiped so faithfully was surely no Christian one; the mark of Pan's hoof was too evident upon her. She was deeply religious and even more deeply superstitious.

She filled me with the forebodings of her belief and credos. Even now her ghosts and pixies dance macabrely before my open eyes.

She took many things into her hands. She was my nurse, my mentor, and my judge. She allowed me to be punished by no one, except, of course, grand-pere, who had a stronger will and more withering tongue than she, and herself. Her manner was novel,—first she prophesied, then she chastised. She would put her hand on her bulbous bulges that substituted for hips, throw her head back and begin:

"You young sinna," she would rant, "I see yo' beatin' 'gainst gatez ob hell, and I see Satan lashin' you wif a cat-ob-nine-tails made ob yo' sins."

Bedelia dressed much as the other Negro women did; but how well her clothes became her buxom bulk. She had a decided flair for them, and a perfect instinct. The proportions were always right, the colors good. Her full skirts would swing rhythmically when she walked. Her flat-heeled sandals gave her a free and erect carriage. She never wore the bunny-eared bandanna, but always a beautifully folded and draped turban. On ordinary occasions it was soft and gleaming white like our porcelain dinner ware.

But come Sunday, she would wear one of a Paisley pattern, brown and tan and gold. Always she wore large gold hoops in her ears.

I can still see her—vivid, striking, magnificent.

THE MULEY COW

Jonas Hollon

It was Saturday afternoon and Jack Wiggens was on his way to see his sweetheart, Cinda Perkins. Jack always looked forward to Saturday afternoons because that was the time that he could be with Cinda. He was dressed in his "Saturday's best," namely, blue jeans, white shirt, and a hat that was badly in need of reblocking.

It was hot that afternoon, too. Jack tried not to walk so fast, but he found it useless to try to slow himself down, because after a few steps he would be walking fast again. He was really anxious to see Cinda that day. As he walked along, he kept thinking of how kind and considerate Cinda was.

"We ain't never had a cross word," he said half aloud. "She's allus satisfied to just set around home when I go to see her, an' I'm shore mighty proud of it, too. 'Cause I don't want a woman that is traipsing all over the country and is allus a-wantin' to go to some fang-dangled party."

As he came around a bend in the road, he could see the neat little

cottage where Cinda lived. A tall maple tree cast a cool dark shadow across the well-kept lawn. He half expected to see Cinda sitting there in the shade waiting for him, but she was nowhere in sight. "Probably in th' kitchen washin' th' dishes," he thought to himself. He took a large red handkerchief from his hip pocket, and wiped away the sweat that was streaming down his face.

When he came near the gate, Rover, Cinda's big collie dog, announced his presence. Recognizing Jack, Rover lowered his head as if ashamed of himself for not knowing his master's friend, and wagged his tail to assure Jack that he was welcome. Then he came running toward Jack and playfully began to jerk his trouser legs.

By this time Cinda was out on the porch and was laughing at Jack as he pulled the playful dog slowly up the walk.

"Howdy, Cinda," Jack called cheerfully. "Some of these days this here pup of yourn is goin' to tear my breeches legs plumb off."

"Turn loose, Rover. Come on in, Jack," Cinda said.

"I'm too hot to go inside just now," Jack replied. "Us set out here in th' shade for a while."

"That's all right with me, if these little sweatbees will let us alone."

They walked over and sat down in the soft, cool grass near the trunk of the maple tree. Jack did not say anything for sometime. He was too busy thinking about how pretty Cinda was and how lucky he was to have such a nice girl. There were other boys in the community—Tom Johnson, for instance—who had tried to take her away from him, but she paid them no mind. Just why she chose him, he did not know, but he did know he was very glad. He would even ask her to marry him if he knew that she would and if he was not too bashful to ask her.

"Been working hard this week?" Cinda asked, bringing Jack down again to earth.

"Not too hard. Just hoed that field of corn there above th' barn an' topped a few rows of terbakker," was Jack's answer.

"That's enough for one poor boy to do all by himself, I think," Cinda said.

"Oh, I guess I don't mind it so bad 'cause I've allus got something to look forward to on Saturday evening."

At this remark Cinda blushed a little and turned her head.

"Are you going to the dance tonight?" she asked, after she had stopped blushing.

"What dance?"

"Why, don't you know? George Toll is having a house warmin' tonight an' he has done invited us over. Th' Williams boys are goin' to make th' music, and everybody will have a big time."

"I guess they will, but I just can't go. I have t' go back home purty soon and chop wood, an' gather eggs, an' milk m' cow. By th' time I do all that, I'll be too tired to do anything 'cept sleep."

"Milk your cow? Don't you ever think of anything else but milkin' that cow at exactly the same time twice a day?"

"Somebody has to milk her. She shore won't milk herself."

"But can't you let her go just once? I don't reckon her bag would bust, would it?"

"No, I s'pose not, but that ain't exactly good for her."

"Can't you milk her a little early tonight?"

"She won't give'r milk down. Eliza is a stubborn cow."

"She ain't no more stubborner than you are, Jack Wiggins," Cinda cried.

"If she won't give her milk down, she won't give her milk down, an' there ain't nothin' I can do about it."

"All right, if you don't go with me I know somebody who will."

"Who's that?"

"Tom Johnson, that's who."

"Tom Johnson?"

"That's what I said. He don't have a cow to milk."

"So that's the way you feel about it? If I can't go with you because I have to work, you will get somebody else!"

"You heared what I said. I'll get Tom Johnson."

"Go ahead and get him, an' see what I care!"

"Well, I like that!"

"What do you want me to do? Cry?"

"Well, of all the lowdown, cheap, ornery people, you're th' worst!"

"You're not so good yourself, wantin' a poor old cow to suffer all night just because you want to go out an' kick up your heels at a square dance."

"And to think, I was thinking about marrying you when—if ever—you asked me to," Cinda said angrily.

"For Pete's sake, why don't you shut up. I'm . . . Hey! What did you say?"

"You heard what I said, but I'm glad I've found you out. You care more for your old muley cow than you do for me," Cinda said, crying a little.

Feeling that the crying was somewhat forced, Jack was more encouraged. "Do you mean that? Do you mean you will marry me?"

"I said that I would have married you if you ever asked me to, but . . ."

"Well, I'm askin' you now. Come on, us go to th' dance an' celebrate."

"But what about your cow?"

"Aw shucks, she's goin' to have to get used to some changes anyhow."

WILL IT ALWAYS?

Dolores Walker

It's like the ever-changing
But incessant momentum of rain
In instants of downpour,
That beats an unvoiced
No—
In my unhearing ear.
Then it lifts with the torrent—
Leaving a fresh, new sweetness
To the shining cleansed world—
And a faint suggestion of
Perhaps—

ALONG EDUCATIONAL LINES

Flossie Davis

Gad! How slow we're moving—only one slide of the foot at a time! I have been here since three minutes after eight, and I've gone only the length of my shadow at noon! Everybody—most of them teachers—is talking, talking—some excitedly—some idly to somebody behind or in front.

"My husband is a big eater," I hear a voice behind me say.

"Mine, too," another says. "He can eat a whole fried chicken any time."

"Fried chicken! That's exactly what I need right now—a good, greasy brown breast of a fried chicken!"

My stomach lets out a loud gurgling groan, and I force a big empty cough, hoping that it will keep anybody from hearing.

"Why didn't I eat more than a little old half of grapefruit and a cup of coffee for breakfast this morning?" I ask myself.

"Hello there!" I'm startled for a minute. I can't believe my eyes! Here stands my old friend, Johnny Dunn. "I haven't seen you since we had History 141 back in '39," he adds.

Johnny and I chat a few minutes. He tells me that he has been teaching up in Jackson county . . . "good system—swell superintendent—pay is fair."

The same old Johnny, a little older, a bit more dignified, but still gay and friendly as ever.

After he leaves, my thoughts sail back to '39 when Johnny and I sat side by side in history class. He wore a big Elgin, and every day when I had heard about enough of Charlemagne, I would restlessly demand the time.

"Five after four," he'd say.

It always was precisely that time of day, and we giggled a few times in class. The teacher was a good-natured old soul and never seemed to object.

"Oh! Excuse me." I'm suddenly startled back into '49 again by a light tap on the shoulder from the lady behind. It is my time to move, for the line has suddenly plunged forward a few inches.

My feet are aching all the way up to my hip bones.

Why in the dickens didn't I wear my black ballets instead of these painful old high-heels?

I glance at my watch—10:15. Two hours and twelve minutes, and I'm only up to the coke machine! I'll get a coke if I've got a nickel.

I rummage around in my purse for at least ten minutes and finally drag out two dimes, three pennies and a bent hairpin, but no nickel.

"Oh, well," I console myself, "I'll drop out of line up at the water fountain and cool my insides there. Cold water is better for me anyway—no calories, and I'll be saving my nickel."

I look at the change still in my hand. I hold a penny on my finger tips and look for the date. Made in 1938, the year I started to college as a freshman. My! How fast time flies! What do I mean **time** flies? Here I've been all morning trying to register! Time this morning hasn't flown. I guess years fly while minutes drag.

A clammy-skinned veteran in front of me tells me that he has transferred over from U. K. because of high rent and big prices on food. He says he was lucky to find a snug little two-room apartment with a private bath pretty close to the campus. He says he is a senior majoring in social science and that his wife was taking home ec, but she had to quit because of the baby. He says that the baby's name is George, but they call him "Slick." He's eight months old and weighs **nineteen pounds** and **ten ounces!** The veteran lights one Camel from the butt of another. I count eleven smashed butts on the floor. No wonder his right thumb and index finger are greenish.

A friend stops to chat with the veteran. I nearly laugh out loud when I see a big price tag dangling from the extreme rear of his obviously new trousers. I take a look at the tag. It says $6.98.

Why doesn't this all-fired old line go on? A snail would already have had his degree and gone.

The fellow with the price tag has just pushed into the line. So, **that's** why we're moving like molasses in sub-zero. I'll bet a lot of people are squeezing in all along up front. The **nerve** of some people.

At last I can see the stairs! A pear-shaped female with cloudy eyes and a mass of mud-colored hair is drooping on the top step. Her yellow jersey dress is much too short for level ground, and at this elevation . . . well! I give my own skirt a quick tug in pure embarrassment.

We move again—11:02—two hours and fifty-nine minutes!

I'm going, going up the steps now. One . . . two . . . three . . . four . . . STOP! I wonder why the sudden jolt—something farther ahead out of the line of my vision.

Oh, Lord! I'm dying, dying! Please hurry!

A fly is buzzing lazily around my head. For the want of something to do, my eyes follow him around. He is a bomber looking for a landing field.

Swish! He makes a three-point landing right in the center of a blue flower in a girl's blouse. He pauses briefly and hoists his wings as though he has suddenly thought of something he forgot and zooms off out the open window.

Wonderful sight! I have at last reached the spot where I can see the registrar's window. One, two, three, four . . . ten . . . thirteen, fourteen, people in front of me—nine women and five men.

It is 11:15 by my watch. I remember that it is three minutes fast and I turn it back to 11:12. I'd rather have a watch that gains a minute or two in a day than one that loses.

We're going a little faster now. I'm fifth from the window.

Gazing at the mail boxes in the front hall, I try to count them—

"One, two, three, four—too many people walking in front—five, six . . ."

"Your card, please!" I fumble violently through a catalog in my hands, trying to find it.

"Hurry please!" says the voice at the window again.

My goodness! Why do they get in such a hurry?